FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
ABOUT THE
SITE VISIT STAGE
OF THE
MALCOLM BALDRIGE NATIONAL QUALITY AWARD PROCESS

1) How many Examiners participate in the site visit process?

Generally, less than one-quarter of Examiners who complete a Stage 1 review will receive a Site Visit Team assignment. The majority of Examiners on Site Visit Teams typically have evaluated the applicant during Stage 1 and/or participated in the Consenus review of the applicant during Stage 2. However, Examiners may be added to teams to ensure proper team balance and diversity. See the question "How are team members selected for Site Visit Teams?" for more information.

2) How are team members selected for Site Visit Teams?

Our goal for every Site Visit Team is to ensure proper team balance. To this end, we seek to have a diverse team that varies in Award process experience, industry/sector expertise, and Category expertise. To be selected, Examiners must also be available to participate in the entire site visit process.

3) What are the major phases of the site visit process and what are my time commitments for each of these phases?

The major phases of the site visit process are the pre-site planning phase, the on-site phase, and the post-site phase. The planning phase typically takes 10-20 hours and includes preparing Site Visit Issue Worksheets, pre-site visit telephone calls, conversations with Category leads and backups, and a one-day planning meeting at a hotel near the headquarters location of the applicant. The on-site phase typically lasts two to four days at the applicant's site to conduct interviews and review documents pertaining to the team's site visit issues. The post-site phase includes two to three days back at the hotel to write and finalize the site visit scorebook. The size and complexity of the applicant will influence the length of time spent during all phases of the site visit. Generally, Examiners can expect to spend five to seven days conducting the complete site visit in addition to the preparation time. For additional information on the site visit process and time commitments, reference pages 3-20 in the Site Visit Manual and page 3-1 of the 2004 Examiner Handbook.

4) This is my first time on a Site Visit Team. What are the different roles and assignments for team members? How are assignments made? Will I have the same Category/Item assignment that I had during the consensus review?

There are several standard roles that Site Visit Team members perform throughout the entire process. These roles are Team Leader, Backup Team Leader, Category/Item Lead and Backup, Computer Expert, and Scorebook Editor. Each of these roles is covered on page 3-1 of the Site Visit Manual. (Note: Your team may also create additional roles, such as Criteria Champion, Key Factors Monitor, and Key Themes Monitor to aid in the review of the applicant.) <u>However, it is important to note that you may not have the same Category/Item assignments that you had during the consensus review.</u> Your team leader will consider any new team members who were added as well other factors in determining the most appropriate assignments for team members.

5) I just found out that my applicant is going on to site visit. What will my team leader ask me to do to prepare for the site visit? What are my first tasks?

Congratulations! Your team leader will inform you of your first tasks. Typically, team leaders will ask you to provide your

- expertise and preferences for Item assignments,
- assigned draft Site Visit Issue Worksheets,
- suggestions, based on the site visit issues, for whom to interview, which sites to visit, and what strategies and approaches to use,
- computer and software you will bring to the site visit, and
- travel, arrival, and departure plans.

6) I am a newly added member to my Site Visit Team. I did not review the application during the Stage 1 Independent Review or participate in the consensus review of the applicant. What do I need to do to prepare for the site visit process?

If you are a newly added member to a Site Visit Team, you will receive a package from ASQ containing the application, Consensus Scorebook, and other materials. Once you receive this package, you should read the application and scorebook, review the other materials, and await contact from the team leader. The team leader will discuss your Item/Category preferences and other information with you.

7) I am having trouble drafting my site visit issue worksheet. Is there any advice you can offer to help me?

Site visit issue worksheets contain several important components, including your site visit issue, your strategy for researching the issue, your findings based on your research, and your conclusions. The most basic advice is to make the worksheet as specific and clear as possible because you may have to “hand off” the sheet to one of your team mates during the site visit. This means that your site visit issue should clearly connect to comments in the Consensus Scorebook and your strategy should identify the specific people you want to interview and/or the specific documents you want to review as well as the purpose for the interviews/document reviews. Before proceeding with drafting your worksheets, you should download and review the Just-In-Time Site Visit training documents on this Website. You should also review Section 7 of the Site Visit Manual.

8) **Who takes care of my hotel and travel reservations as well as the other logistical aspects of the site visit? Is there anything I need to do?**

Your hotel reservations will be made by your team's ASQ contact person and your hotel room will be paid directly by ASQ. ASQ and your NIST Site Visit Monitor will also assist with ordering the food for your team. Your only responsibilities are arranging for transportation to and from your home to the airport as well as to and from the airport and the hotel near the applicant's site. All of these logistical details will be discussed on the planning calls for your site visit, so you will have ample opportunity to discuss any questions you might have.

9) **When should I plan on arriving on site and what should I bring?**

Your team will discuss the specific arrival and departure times for your site visit as well as what to pack on your pre-site visit planning calls. Generally, you should plan on arriving at the hotel near the headquarters location of the applicant no later than Sunday morning of the week of your site visit, and you should plan on departing the hotel no earlier than 8:00 p.m. on the following Saturday. You should pack the following items: comfortable clothes (e.g., jeans or sweatpants) for working at the hotel, your Baldrige name badge, appropriate attire for the days you are on-site with the applicant, all applicant materials (application, scorebooks, etc.), a laptop computer, your site visit manual, and any other materials that you wish to take.

10) **I keep hearing about the site visit planning meeting. What exactly is this planning meeting and when does it take place?**

The site visit planning meeting is the last step in the planning phase of the site visit process. The meeting takes place at a hotel near the headquarters location of the applicant the day before the Opening Meeting of the site visit and typically lasts 8-10 hours. The purpose of the meeting is to finalize the site visit issue worksheets, the site visit schedule, and other planning details. A sample agenda for a site visit planning meeting can be found on pages 5-15 and 5-16 of the Site Visit Manual.

11) **Can electronic mail be used to forward draft Site Visit Worksheets to other team members?**

No. The same rules apply as Consensus. Electronic mail via the Internet is not a secure means of communication for purposes of exchanging applicant information and should not be used. Instead, use overnight mail, a secure fax (where only the recipient Examiner has access), or an insecure fax if the Examiner is present to personally and immediately receive the fax. The use of cellular and cordless telephones for site visit planning calls is also not a secure means of communication and, thus, is not permitted.

12) **Can other office staff, family members, or anyone else help prepare and transmit site visit documents?**

No. Other persons should not prepare, copy, or transmit confidential site visit documents. Examiners are solely responsible for all the materials and information.

13) How can Site Visit Team members be contacted by their offices or families on the site visit?

In upholding the Rules of Conduct, it is important to maintain the confidentiality of the applicant. It is best to provide the Baldrige National Quality Program telephone number (301-975-2036) to those who may need to contact you in an emergency. You may also be contacted via your cell phone. If necessary, the hotel telephone number may be provided for evening contact.

14) Will I be paired with other Examiners while we are onsite with the applicant, including for "walk around" questions? By the way, what are "walk around" questions?

In reseearching your site visit issues at the applicant's site(s), you will likely be conducting one of the following activities: conducting formal interviews, conducting walk around interviews, or reviewing documents. The formal interviews, which are typically conducted with the applicant's Category/Item leads and senior leaders, must be conducted in pairs to enable one Examiner to capture the discussion while the other one conducts the interview. "Walkaround interviews," in which Examiners walk around the various applicant sites and ask employees questions to check for alignment and deployment, also require Examiners to work in pairs. Document reviews do not require Examiners to work in pairs.

15) What is entailed in finalizing the site visit scorebook back at the hotel after we leave the applicant's site? When is my work as a team member complete?

After leaving the applicant's site, there is still an average of 28-35 hours of work to be done back at the hotel. This includes preparing and finalizing all parts of the site visit issue scorebook, including all site visit issue worksheets, all Item Worksheets, the Key Themes worksheet, the Key Factors Worksheet, and the Summary of Sites Visited Worksheet. Before finalizing each of these worksheets, the team will post the documents on the wall in the team room for review and approval by each team member. This sequential process of posting the documents on the wall and reviewing and approving them is called "Walking the Wall." A written description and flowchart of the "Walking the Wall" process can be found on pages 5-25 and 5-26 of the Site Visit Manual.

Once these worksheets are complete, the team discusses the effect of the site visit on the score and prepares the score summary worksheet. All team members then sign the signature page attesting that they support the findings contained in the scorebook, and the scorebook is assembled and copied. Once this is done, your involvement as a Site Visit Team member is complete, and you can depart from the hotel. The remaining site visit tasks are peformed by the team leader and backup team leader.

16) I participated in the site visit stage last year. What's new and different this year?

The site visit process is generally the same this year as last year. There are only four differences worth noting.

- First, **the development of draft SVIs** is now optional at Stage 2. However, this is a mandatory activity during the planning phase of Stage 3.
    - Each site visit team must draft and reach consensus on 2-4 site visit issues (SVIs) per Item that the team will clarify or verify when on site. The team leader has the discretion to decide **when** and **who** will carry out the site visit issue development process (drafting, reviewing, and revising draft SVIs).
    - As in previous years, all team members must come to consensus with all SVIs, and the related strategies. **(Guidance provided on pages XXX in the Site Visit Manual)**
- Second, **scoring –** A member of the team transfers the percent scoring range from consensus using the consensus scoresheet and the percent scoring range based on the site visit findings for each Item. Each Item Lead will make an initial recommendation of a scoring range on their respective Item Worksheets. The team will come to consensus and indicate the changes due to the site visit findings (e.g., higher range, lower range, same range). Finally, using the Scoring Band Descriptors, the team determines which descriptor best reflects the team's view of the applicant and indicates the band number at the bottom of the Score Summary Worksheet – Site Visit. **(See pages 1-18, 1-19, 4-20 and 4-21 in the Site Visit Manual)**
    - Higher Range – The Site Visit team is recommending a scoring range for an Item that is higher than the scoring range at consensus.
    - Same Range – The Site Visit team is recommending the same scoring range for an Item as in consensus.
    - Lower Range – The Site Visit team is recommending a scoring range for an Item that is lower than the scoring range at consensus.
- Third, **requesting documents one-week prior to site visit –** To help the applicant prepare for the site visit, the Team Leader will provide a list of requested documents to the OCP. Only documents that will help clarify or verify the applicant's processes and results may be requested. The documents requested will be made available to the team immediately following the opening meeting. Please note that after the opening meeting, additional documentation will be requested.

- Fourth, **Day One Schedule one-week prior to the site visit –** To assist the applicant in the arranging for the avaialbility of key people, one-week prior to the start of the site visit the Team Leader will submit the day-one interview schedule for the On-Site phase of the Site Visit.

17) I still have questions. Where can I get additional information about the site visit process?

There are several documents that will provide you with additional information on the site visit process. These documents are the Site Visit Manual and the Examiner Handbook (pages 8-1 to 8-5). All of these documents and many other valuable materials can be found on this Website.

Of course, you may still have questions. If this is the case, you should contact your team leader or the NIST monitor assigned to your team. Their names and contact information can be found in the team roster that you were provided in your site visit package.